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"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
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**PROFESSION "FILM CRITIC": RUSSIAN TRENDS OF THE
INTERNET AGE**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to determining the direction of the development of the “film criticism” profession in modern Russia in the era of the market and the Internet; description of the varieties of professional and amateur criticism; study of the processes of interaction between them and the public. The study used the methods of analysis of scientific literature and of critics' opinions, as well as the method of monitoring the practice of traditional publications and the activities of bloggers covering the problems of cinema. The study showed that the publications related to the film criticism exist within the film press along with the texts belonging to the fields of film science, film reviewing, film journalism, film promotion, film advertising and PR, which should be distinguished from each other. The critic itself is differentiated on various grounds: subject, direction, purpose, involvement in industrial relations, the level of understanding of the processes taking place in the cinema art. Today, the practical work of professional criticism on print media is increasingly difficult because of the financial problems. Magazines are forced to move to the Internet, and individual publications – to the special sites. But on the Internet they are met by so-called amateur criticism, created by bloggers, who can broadcast adequate values for the audience and find a common language with it due to the freedom of expression, diversity and simplicity of texts, direct assessments and recommendations for viewing. That is why the professional criticism should certainly engage in dialogue with the amateur criticism.

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Keywords: Cinema, internet, mass media, criticism, blogger, public.



1. Introduction

In nowadays professional newspaper and magazine criticism (including film critics) is actively leaving from the closing publishing houses and moving to the Internet. Undoubtedly, this is also related to the position of the print media as traditional media, the circulation of which has recently plummeted, and with the state of criticism, which is experiencing strong competition from the online publications and their authors. The second factor of criticism's change of fate is the ambiguous reaction of theorists and the media practitioners. Someone blames the professional critics who separate themselves from the audience, someone reproaches the audience itself, who all of a sudden goes from the category of public, that watch movies and read reviews, responses, reviews, into the category of writing people. The reasons for the described phenomena could be, on the one hand, the rapid development of new technologies, and on the other hand, the growing users activity, their desire to participate in mass-communication processes not only as consumers, but also as creators of critical content. The rivalry between professionals and non-professionals, which arises in the Internet and stimulates both sides, is the subject of our study.

2. Problem Statement

The problem is that criticism today as a sociocultural phenomenon and a type of creative activity appears itself in a state of the terminological and functional uncertainty. Critic, Ermolin (2015), describes this situation. Existing on the territory of media, that is, "film press", film critic meets with a number of familiar professions that it is often confused with. But it is important to distinguish them, as they relate to different aspects of the cinema. Here is how the critic Matizen (2005) differentiates them: film experts (Ehl'zesser & Hagener, 2018; Kuvshinova, 2014) (theorists and film historians) study the classics; film critics (Myasnikova, 2014, 2015; Novikov, 2015, 2016, 2017) – modern film process; film reviewers (Avdeeva, 2014; Molitvina, 2015) (including online reviewers) give feedback on some certain films; film journalists (Saenkova-Mel'nickaya, 2018) write about the events in the cinema sector and about those who make movies; promoters hired either by producers or distribution companies promote films; advertisers and PR filmmakers secretly or explicitly advertise "their" products (Matizen, 2005, p. 32). So, "the advertiser praises "his" product, the journalist informs about someone else, the critic separates the wheat from the chaff, and the film critic decides on the place in the cultural space for the selected grains," (Matizen, 2013, p. 699) – summarizes Matizen (2005).

3. Research Questions

Thus, researchers are faced with issues regarding the distinction between traditional professional criticism (in this case, film critics) and other activities in the field of film cognition. Many theorists and practitioners of the media think about this nowadays. Thus, the issue of comparing criticism and journalism is considered to be highly relevant. Also important is the issue of the distinction line between professional criticism and amateur one. Finally, the issue of audience participation in a conversation about art.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the directions in which the film critic is developing in Russia at present, that is, in the era of the market and the Internet; to study specific types of professional and amateur criticism; to show how they interact with each other and with the public.

5. Research Methods

The study used the methods of analysis of scientific literature and numerous statements and assessments of current critics, as well as the method of observing the practice of media and bloggers.

6. Findings

According to Kopylova (2011), during the Soviet period film journalism and film criticism there was almost no division of the film release and its analysis. But at the same time there was a high level of professionalism of publications about cinematography in the mass press. Film critics' articles and current reviews were published not only on the pages of some specialized editions, but also in some social and political ones for the general reader. "Film criticism followed the film studies' cue, and a film journalist followed film critic's, keeping in mind professional knowledge of the theory and the cinematography history" (pp. 3-4). But then the market has replaced the usual order of things, thus has changed much. As Kopylova (2011) notes, by the beginning of 2000 three types of film criticism appeared in our country: "1) film criticism as a cultural or philosophical and esthetical discourse; 2) film criticism as art-criticism; 3) film criticism as journalism" (p. 7). They all differ in the subject, slant and purpose. "The first type is aimed at a sense-making set, at cultural and sociological, philosophical aspects of cinematic material; the second – at the analysis of a film text; the third is at an addressee or an addressant of culture, representing a link between the artist, the film and the audience" (p. 7).

However, the ratio of these activities is not in practice harmonious and orderly. The tasks of artcriticism are reduced, and journalism conducts itself towards criticism sometimes in an overactive and even aggressive manner, as picked up by the PR "waves". The functioning of professional criticism, torn apart in the communicative space, is carried out under the sign of the film business. The researcher Tyazhlov (2016) draws attention to the fact that today any published critique potentially becomes not only public domain, but also inevitably includes the film evaluation, becoming a figurant of market relations – the media management and the promotion systems. Today, a film critic is not able to break out of the market context, even when concentrates on studying of the cinematography history, which is also monetized today within retrospective shows, festivals, as well as with the help optical media publications, online cinemas. Film critic Ratthaus (2012) suggests dividing professional film critics according to the principle of their involvement in the industrial relations: 1) film critics who serve the industry; 2) film critics who take an unbiased position and monetize it; 3) film critics who work beyond the industrial schemes.

Depending on the level of generality and the film-critical paradigm, the other well-known film expert and film critic Mikhail Yampolsky, divides film criticism into philosophical (traditional) and professional, preferring the first (as cited in Orlova, 2012). At the same time, expert film criticism (both professional and philosophical) is opposed by M. Yampolsky to that amateur film criticism as a mass

phenomenon that appeared due to the media environment democratization in the context of IT development. And this is another trend of the market and the Internet era.

What are the characteristics of professional criticism? 1) Certainly, the presence of extensive knowledge; 2) the comprehensible criteria system; 3) the active moral component; 4) the appeal to professional colleagues and to the audience; 5) the desire to educate the viewer; 6) the ability of a critic to be a person, who accumulates an intellectual environment around him; 7) the artistic expressiveness of the text; 8) publicist. The professional texts are elite in their essence, which a common man does not always fully understand. The authors have gained special education and experience in the cinematography, where writing critical reviews is almost always their core task. Although, in all fairness, it should be said that today's professional criticism largely loses its these important characteristics. As a result, its credibility goes down. More frequently the question arises: do we need it at all? Although the critic Matizen (2005), for example, is convinced that there is still a need for criticism as an introspection tool for cinematography: "Criticism promotes cinema as an art. Criticism creates reputations of films and filmmakers. Criticism, and only it itself, keeps the memory of films and ensures the places in the history of cinematography. Those, who are not reflected in the film press mirror, exist physically, but not mentally" (p. 41).

However, the former existence of professional criticism on paper records – in the magazine space – is becoming more problematic (Kolomijceva, 2018; Manovich, 2018; Teplyashina, 2018). Thus, the paper version of the oldest domestic monthly magazine about cinematography "Art of Cinema", published since 1931, is now being distributed only throughout the biggest Russian cities; and there is a website, created in 2003, that now publishes film reviews and articles from the mentioned magazine (including archives'), as well as some news from the festivals, and contains independent materials, including irregularly published blogs of some authors. However, the new website does not allow to get acquainted with all the materials from the paper version of the magazine and it is also monetized.

The "Seance" magazine, created in 1989 on the initiative of the young Leningrad film critics is published twice a year. Since 1994, "Seance" began its publishing, and since 1997, research activities. However, then the publication of the magazine was suspended for 6 years and resumed only in 2004. Together with the print version in its format of thick black-and-white thematic double editions, "Seance" exists online. Seance.ru is a daily portal about cinematography and culture. In addition to the website and the printed edition, since 2012, the "Seance" publication has been actively developing in social networks. In 2016, the paper version of the magazine "Afisha" ceased to exist. Today it exists only in the Internet as a resource afisha.ru, competing with the national cinema portal film.ru, the leading Russian specialized online cinematography publication, one of the oldest and largest cinema websites having existed since December 1999 and released 2,5 thousands reviews by that time.

As for amateur film criticism, these texts are written by people without special education. Here are the features of amateur (everyday) criticism that Davydova (2012) defines: 1) this criticism concentrates on the process of one's own perception; 2) the film is placed into the "production" market context; 3) the personal emotional experience of the reviewer is involved; 4) the direct recommendations for viewing are given; 5) the use of the author self-description method, not valid for the professionals; 6) the use of "you" form while appealing to the reader; 7) the author refers to everyday viewers' opinions; 8) the language of

the statement is eclectic; emoticons and pejorative (disapproving, derogatory) vocabulary is used. Amateur criticism does not own the codes of the profession, rules, conventions, criteria.

Professional criticism, designed either for intellectuals or for itself, remains a closed system. It does not come into contact with amateur criticism. The first generally seeks to ignore the second. However, it is in a conversation about amateur critics who are creating their own specialized film blogs or posting video reviews on Internet platforms like youtube.com that the most important problem arises, the problem of the relationship between criticism and public. After all, amateur critics are the most advanced and energetic part of the public in the cinema. Many consider amateur critics as competitors to professionals. Aksenova (2013) is quoted as follows, “the audience can quite independently satisfy its information needs, practically without resorting to the services of professional journalists”. Moreover, the paradox is that the so-called “ordinary” criticism is the more attractive to the audience, the lower its professionalism is. But this is not the case, but the fact is that amateur critics (being part of the public) know how to find a common language with it and broadcast adequate values for this audience. In addition, the Internet does not limit the authors working in it neither in space nor in time. As a result, the public, gathered by amateur critics, is increasingly at odds with professional criticism, which today is losing prestige all over the world. Nick James, editor-in-chief of *Sight & Sound* magazine, a publication of the British Film Institute (BFI), writes about this: “... professional authors lose their status and are becoming less and less popular. Over the past few years, many professionals have lost their jobs” (as cited in Paisova, 2009). The reasons for this phenomenon, the author sees in the popularity of amateur reviews, freedom of speech on the Internet, disregard of distributors towards critics, the contradictions between the claims of professional critics for peer review and their desire to be spokespersons for public opinion.

Viewers have no opportunity to argue with the authors on the newspaper pages. It was not by chance that in the first decades of the cinema's existence in different countries of the world (and above all in France) cinema clubs began to emerge, soon they turned into organizations of movie lovers, where film screenings, lectures, discussions and professional critics were present, whom viewers could talk with. Now these disputes have migrated to the special Internet forums. There, viewers are turning into amateur critics, whose influence on the audience today is particularly troubles professionals.

And recently there has appeared such an effective genre as “video review”, where the text about the film is presented in parallel with the frames from it. Network video review is a good way of self-expression and personal statement about the film, a reason to exchange views, collectively search for the truth and, like in former times in film clubs, to join the cinema of those who have not joined yet. Ultimately, this is a way of mass cinema propaganda, on the one hand, and educating future film critics, on the other.

Let us name Yevgeny Bazhenov, one of the most famous video bloggers specializing in film criticism in Russia, as an example. Bazhenov's principle of creating reviews has remained unchanged since 2011. Films are considered “step by step”, from beginning to end. Separate episodes are shown to the audience, which the author comments on, pointing to script mistakes, illogical actions of the characters, poor acting, camera work, editing or unsuccessful special effects. At the same time, in contrast to the review in the print edition, the film's disadvantages are shown especially clearly in the video review. He not only examines in detail the advantages and disadvantages of the picture, but also studies the history of its creation; analyzes interviews with directors and actors, videos and photos from the set, the original source

book (if any), the historical context in which the events take place (if the film is historical), and the entire broad cinema context using excerpts from other films. Bazhenov is emotional and knows how to infect the viewer with his feelings, sometimes not being limited in expressions. The author knows his audience, so he skillfully inserts jokes and memes that are popular among young people, thus creating the comic effects he needs in one way or another.

His first video review was devoted to the film “Burnt by the Sun – 2” by Nikita Mikhalkov. Then Bazhenov was attracted to the cooperation by the CarambaTV team, which, however, limited his creative freedom, setting a limit on the length of the videos – 15 minutes, which he, however, was able to increase to 40-60 minutes later. In 2014, when CarambaTV became a partner of CTC Media, and its content began to be posted on Peretz channel, Bazhenov appeared on the TV screen, but at the same time his broadcasts were reduced to 5 minutes. At the end of 2014, Bazhenov returned to an independent development model on YouTube. The peculiarity of Bazhenov is that his activities are not of a commercial nature. No advertising, no integration from sponsors, no participation in paid public campaigns – BadComedian carefully protects the blog from reputational risks. Yevgeny’s only regular income items are donations (user donations) and YouTube payments (Berezina & Karasev, 2018). Yevgeny’s additional, but irregular source of income is his own stand-up tour show in Russia and CIS countries.

Numerous costumed reincarnations of Bazhenov on the screen are an integral part of his reviews, which his fans like. But this is more like a freak show for teenagers. In general, the audience of the three Bazhenov channels on YouTube and its communities in social networks is 5.8 million users.

One of Bazhenov’s newest reviews, “Santa Claus: The Battle of Mages,” was released on January 7, 2019. As of February 25, the review on YouTube scored 4,400,000 views, while, according to the «Kinopoisk» website, the movie itself attracted only a little more than seven hundred thousand viewers. This tendency can be traced in the case of many other Bazhenov’s reviews and films that they criticize. This means that the audience of Bazhenov has already got used to watching reviews and to trust the critic’s opinion before watching a film in the cinema. If you consider other Bazhenov’s video reviews taken over the last three months, they are the same popular: Gas-holder-2 – 5.7 million; New Christmas trees – 5.6 million; Temporary difficulties – 6.4 million. By the way, reviews that have passed the “test of time” are gaining much more (for example, the video for the movie "Moving Up", shot 8 months ago, has now gained 14 million views).

Why is the audience still attracted by amateur texts? Mainly, it is diversity. That is why, KinoPoisk is so popular: there, among the vast number of reviews, one can always find a congenial author. And the very availability of materials on almost any film that has ever been released captivates the public. Also important is the factor of clarity to the reader. In addition, such criticism gives a direct assessment, helping the reader to navigate in the cinema. This is not always possible for professional authors, who often ignore popular mass films, which need a guide for the ordinary viewer. Needless to say, many of those who read professional portals in search of the most authoritative opinion, often look at the mentioned KinoPoisk, in order to be able to see much more diverse judgments and impressions. And in general now there are far fewer professionals than amateurs, although in fairness it should be noted that today these same professionals has come to KinoPoisk: individual reviews of our most famous critics are published there: A. Plakhov, N. Tsirkun, A. Dolin (as cited in Gorbatkova, 2016) and others. This phenomenon also takes place

abroad. Nick James states: “Many successful professional authors, whose works are published in print media, use blogs as a space for creativity: they are not limited in time and means of expression there, publishers and editors cannot impose their own requirements and stereotypes on them” (as cited in Paisova, 2009).

At the same time, professional critics continue to discuss their own positions. So, back in 2012, Anton Dolin proposed the following division of professional critics into two camps in the publication “War of Friends”. As another critic Nelepo (2012) writes about this, “in one they love cinema and hate the viewer, in the other the seventh type of art is not very favored, but they selflessly work for the benefit of the person who comes to the cinema hall”. Anton Dolin refers himself to the second group. “It is significant that Dolin,” Nelepo writes, “gives an extremely unsightly typical portrait of the viewer. This is an ignorant stupid person, unable to remember the name of the director of the picture standing in the credits; he innocently rejoices to everything that he can only be projected onto a movie screen; he is always offended by arrogant indifferent critics. It is necessary to condescend to such a spectator, “to repeat the obvious, to recall the names and biographies of famous figures”; in a word, to lecture <...> It has always seemed to me personally”, – continues Nelepo, “that it is necessary to speak with the viewer / reader as an equal person”. This point of view seems the most productive to us. In general, at the new stage of the culture history (starting from the second half of the twentieth century and especially nowadays, due to the rapid development of the Internet, civil journalism and network publications), the problem of the public is becoming especially urgent. And you should think about it. After all, the public today itself assumes the functions of understanding art, and not in narrow communities or verbally. But in public and in writing ways, seriously competing with professionals (Vorobyova, 2018).

7. Conclusion

In this way film criticism exists in the system of activities (located in the media and denoted by the term “film press”), which must be distinguished. This (besides the film critics) is film studies (the study of the theory and history of cinema); film reviewing (writing of operative reviews for individual films), film journalism (covering the lives of film people and events taking place in it); promotion (promotion of films on the screen); film advertising and PR (explicit and hidden advertising to sell films).

The film critic itself is differentiated by various authors for various reasons: 1) dependence on the subject, direction and purpose as a cultural or philosophical aesthetic discourse, art criticism and journalism (R. Kopylova); 2) depending on the degree of involvement in industrial relations as an activity serving the industry, occupying an independent position, operating outside industrial schemes (M. Ratthaus); 3) depending on the level of generalization and the film critical paradigm as a philosophical and professional type of criticism (M. Yampolsky).

In connection with the development of the Internet and increasing user activity, a new kind of criticism appears – amateur criticism, actively competing in the number of views in networks and practically not in contact with professional criticism, which exists mainly as a closed system either for intellectuals or for itself. Although recently professional critics, losing their popularity among movie audiences, also start their own blogs and publish on popular websites.

In connection with the activation of the audience, often taking on the functions of independent comprehension of art in special forums on the Internet, the problem of studying the public is becoming increasingly relevant, which is divided into mass (sometimes undemanding) and permanent (advanced) public, within which there are amateur critics who are ready to lead a passive audience art. Therefore, professional criticism should pay attention to amateur criticism, engaging in interaction with it, rather than treating it as a competitor.

So, we believe that, sooner or later, natural selection will take place at the institute of Russian film critics. Different points of view will be interesting. Both amateurs and masters possessing the necessary professional skills will have the opportunity to speak in a general dialogue. However, this requires the modernization of the existing confrontation between the two camps. We do not want to say that professionals should change their inherent way of presenting texts. For example, try to write easier. But they need to remember that they write for the viewer firstly, and only then for colleagues. The public needs a sober analysis, thanks to which it could realize why this or that picture is worth seeing. The level of cinema culture (and often culture in general) is quite low among the majority of the people, and not least because those who are able to explain and teach, avoid the audience that needs that help, part of which seeks not only to watch movies, but also to write about it. It is clear that today we need a productive dialogue between professional critics and the public. The Internet can actively contribute to this.

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